



State of California
Respiratory Care Board
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June 3, 2002

Inquiry: I want to know if the Respiratory Care Board has any guidelines concerning verbal or telephone orders taken from a physician.

Are there any business and professional codes regarding this? I know of a hospital that has a policy and procedure for this, the therapists are afraid to follow their protocol because of its vagueness, and it makes them liable for mishaps due to their protocol which is not clear. They do not attempt to change this policy, and have the therapists unprotected. There have been situations where patients have been at risk due to the management neglecting to change their policy. The therapists are afraid to take verbal and telephone orders from a physician because of the vagueness of the policy. Do you have anything regarding this in respect to guidelines?

Response: It is not within the scope of the Respiratory Care Board to render or establish policy regarding issuance of verbal or telephone orders at a facility. The medical staff of the facility and the manager and medical Director of the department determines that practice. It is however within the board's authority to expect public safety, health and welfare be maintained through effective policy and procedure. Should you be able to provide the board with sufficient evidence that patient safety is at risk then we would be compelled to investigate the evidence and act accordingly.

From a practice perspective I would recommend that you investigate and explore any internal mechanisms that may be available to you. Enlisting these may prompt a change in the policy or procedure to ensure safe practice exists. These would include but not be limited to the risk management department, the medical director or the manager of the department.

Reference # 2002-C-20